

News

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Union Membership in Illinois, 2005

In 2005, 16.9 percent of wage and salary workers in Illinois were union members, about the same as the 16.8 percent reported in 2004, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Regional Commissioner Jay A. Mousa noted that the 2004 and 2005 union membership rates were the lowest since the data series for states began in 1989. From 1989 to 1996, Illinois' union membership rate equaled or exceeded 20.0 percent. (See table a.)

At 12.5 percent in 2005, the union membership rate for wage and salary workers in the U.S. was unchanged from a year earlier. The national union membership rate has declined from a high of 20.1 percent in 1983, the first year for which comparable union data are available. Illinois was one of 19 states that had union membership rates above the national average in 2005.

In Illinois, 927,000 wage and salary workers were union members in 2005. An additional 38,000 workers were represented by a union on their main job, while not being union members themselves. Nationwide, nearly 15.7 million wage and salary workers were union members in 2005, while another 1.5 million were represented by a union.

Across the nation, 31 states and the District of Columbia had 2005 union membership rates below the U.S. average of 12.5 percent, while 19 had higher rates. Illinois was one of several Great Lakes states, including Michigan, Ohio, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, with union membership rates above the national average. Rates of union membership in this group ranged from 15.7 percent in Minnesota to 20.5 percent in Michigan. The only Great Lake state with a union membership rate not to exceed the national average was Indiana (12.4 percent).

Five states had union membership rates over 20.0 percent in 2005—New York (26.1 percent), Hawaii (25.8 percent), Alaska (22.8 percent), and Michigan and New Jersey (20.5 percent, each). Five states reported union membership rates below 5.0 percent in 2005. South Carolina and North Carolina recorded the lowest membership rates, 2.3 and 2.9 percent, respectively. Arkansas and Virginia had the next lowest rates, 4.8 percent each, followed closely by Utah at 4.9 percent. (See table 1.)

Just over half (7.9 million) of the 15.7 million union members in the U.S. lived in six states (California, New York, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, and New Jersey), though these states accounted for less than one-third of wage and salary employment nationally. The largest number of union members lived in California (2.4 million) and New York (2.1 million).

State union membership levels depend on both the union membership rate and the employment level. For example, Illinois had over 80 percent more union members than Texas, despite having 4.0 million fewer wage and salary workers. Similarly, Florida and Massachusetts had virtually the same number of union members, even though Florida's wage and salary employment level was over two and one-half times that of Massachusetts.

Table a. Union affiliation of employed wage and salary workers in Illinois, annual averages, 1989-2005

(Numbers in thousands)

Year	Total Employed	Members of unions ¹		Represented by unions ²	
		Total	Percent of employed	Total	Percent of employed
1989	5,015	1,045	20.8	1,145	22.8
1990	4,990	1,038	20.8	1,133	22.7
1991	4,950	1,035	20.9	1,117	22.6
1992	4,987	1,018	20.4	1,089	21.8
1993	4,980	1,046	21.0	1,118	22.5
1994	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1995	5,167	1,042	20.2	1,095	21.2
1996	5,224	1,043	20.0	1,125	21.5
1997	5,234	971	18.5	1,041	19.9
1998	5,328	1,004	18.9	1,064	20.0
1999	5,514	993	18.0	1,054	19.1
2000	5,639	1,046	18.6	1,101	19.5
2001	5,613	1,016	18.1	1,083	19.3
2002	5,445	1,069	19.6	1,119	20.6
2003	5,399	967	17.9	1,003	18.6
2004	5,410	908	16.8	971	17.9
2005	5,473	927	16.9	965	17.6

¹ Data refer to members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union.

² Data refer to members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union, as well as workers who are not members but whose jobs are covered by a union or employee association contract.

n/a – Not available.

Note: The number of persons, or level, is generally based on population controls available at the end of each year. Because historical data are not revised, the levels may not be fully comparable from year to year. However, proportions, such as union membership rates, generally are not affected by revised population controls. Data refer to the sole or principal job of full-and part-time workers. Excluded are all self-employed workers regardless of whether or not their businesses are incorporated.

Technical Note

The estimates in this release are obtained from the Current Population Survey (CPS), which provides the basic information on the labor force, employment, and unemployment in the U.S. The survey is conducted monthly for the Bureau of Labor Statistics by the U.S. Census Bureau from a scientifically selected sample of about 60,000 households nationwide. The union membership data are tabulated from one-quarter of the CPS monthly sample and are limited to wage and salary workers. All self-employed workers are excluded.

Union membership data for 2005 are not strictly comparable with data for 2004 and earlier years because of the introduction in January 2005 of revised population controls used in the CPS. The effect of the revised population controls on union membership estimates is unknown. However, the effect of the new controls on the monthly CPS estimates for the U.S. was to decrease the December 2004 employment level by 45,000 and the unemployment level by 4,000. The updated controls had little or no effect on unemployment rates and other ratios. For additional information, see "Adjustments to Household Survey Population Estimates in January 2005" in the February 2005 issue of *Employment and Earnings*, available on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cps05adj.pdf>.

The number of persons, or level, is generally based on population controls available at the end of each year. Because historical data are not revised, the levels may not be fully comparable from year to year. However, proportions, such as union membership rates, generally are not affected by revised population controls. Also, because different population controls are used, and because the union membership data are based on only one-fourth of the sample, the employment data presented in this release may not match comparable data in the Geographic Profile bulletins.

For personal assistance or further information on union membership, as well as other Bureau programs, contact the Chicago Information Office at 312-353-1880 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. CT. Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-692-5200, TDD message referral phone number: 1-800-877-8339.

Reliability of the estimates

Statistics based on the CPS are subject to both sampling and nonsampling error. When a sample, rather than the entire population, is surveyed, there is a chance the sample estimates may differ from the "true" population values they represent. The exact difference, or sampling error, varies depending upon the particular sample selected, and this variability is measured by the standard error of the estimate. There is about a 90-percent chance, or level of confidence, that an estimate based on a sample will differ by no more than 1.6 standard error from the "true" population value because of sampling error. BLS analyses are generally conducted at the 90-percent level of confidence.

The CPS data also are affected by nonsampling error. Nonsampling error can occur for many reasons, including the failure to sample a segment of the population, inability to obtain information for all respondents in the sample, inability or unwillingness of respondents to provide correct information, and errors made in the collection or processing of the data. For a full discussion of the reliability of data from the CPS and information on estimating standard

errors, see the “Explanatory Notes and Estimates of Error” section of *Employment and Earnings*.

Definitions

The principal definitions used in this release are described briefly below:

- *Union members.* Data refer to members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union.
- *Represented by unions.* Data refer to union members, as well as workers who have no union affiliation but whose jobs are covered by a union or an employee association contract.
- *Wage and salary workers.* Workers who receive wages, salaries, commissions, tips, payment in kind, or piece rates. This group includes employees in both the private and public sectors, but for the purposes of the union membership and earnings series, excludes all self-employed persons, regardless of whether or not their businesses are incorporated.

Table 1. Union affiliation of employed wage and salary workers by state

(Numbers in thousands)

State	2004					2005				
	Total employed	Members of unions ¹		Represented by unions ²		Total employed	Members of unions ¹		Represented by unions ²	
		Total	Percent of employed	Total	Percent of employed		Total	Percent of employed	Total	Percent of employed
Alabama	1,861	181	9.7	213	11.5	1,909	195	10.2	223	11.7
Alaska	268	54	20.1	60	22.4	275	63	22.8	66	24.1
Arizona	2,323	145	6.3	183	7.9	2,366	145	6.1	181	7.7
Arkansas	1,058	51	4.8	65	6.2	1,138	54	4.8	68	6.0
California	14,414	2,385	16.5	2,588	18.0	14,687	2,424	16.5	2,610	17.8
Colorado	2,050	172	8.4	191	9.3	2,052	170	8.3	193	9.4
Connecticut	1,539	235	15.3	256	16.6	1,550	247	15.9	263	17.0
Delaware	373	46	12.4	49	13.2	386	46	11.8	50	12.9
District of Columbia	258	33	12.7	38	14.5	259	29	11.3	33	12.8
Florida	6,943	414	6.0	533	7.7	7,389	401	5.4	532	7.2
Georgia	3,773	242	6.4	282	7.5	3,765	190	5.0	226	6.0
Hawaii	533	126	23.7	132	24.8	545	141	25.8	145	26.7
Idaho	561	33	5.8	44	7.9	606	31	5.2	38	6.3
Illinois	5,410	908	16.8	971	17.9	5,473	927	16.9	965	17.6
Indiana	2,717	311	11.4	338	12.4	2,789	346	12.4	368	13.2
Iowa	1,345	141	10.5	171	12.7	1,369	157	11.5	185	13.5
Kansas	1,223	103	8.4	132	10.8	1,210	85	7.0	115	9.5
Kentucky	1,699	164	9.6	197	11.6	1,696	164	9.7	184	10.8
Louisiana	1,697	129	7.6	157	9.3	1,778	114	6.4	132	7.4
Maine	564	64	11.3	74	13.2	582	69	11.9	79	13.6
Maryland	2,502	272	10.9	313	12.5	2,530	337	13.3	379	15.0
Massachusetts	2,920	393	13.5	430	14.7	2,886	402	13.9	431	14.9
Michigan	4,305	930	21.6	966	22.4	4,288	880	20.5	916	21.4
Minnesota	2,429	424	17.5	443	18.3	2,494	392	15.7	410	16.4
Mississippi	1,108	53	4.8	70	6.3	1,089	77	7.1	105	9.7
Missouri	2,546	315	12.4	357	14.0	2,532	290	11.5	319	12.6
Montana	366	43	11.7	46	12.6	391	42	10.7	48	12.2
Nebraska	831	69	8.3	83	10.0	830	69	8.3	79	9.5
Nevada	1,006	126	12.5	144	14.3	1,051	145	13.8	158	15.1
New Hampshire	618	61	9.9	68	11.0	627	65	10.4	72	11.5
New Jersey	3,769	745	19.8	813	21.6	3,868	791	20.5	838	21.7
New Mexico	734	49	6.7	65	8.9	777	63	8.1	83	10.7
New York	7,901	1,996	25.3	2,085	26.4	8,008	2,090	26.1	2,201	27.5
North Carolina	3,549	97	2.7	127	3.6	3,631	107	2.9	143	3.9
North Dakota	292	22	7.7	26	9.0	289	21	7.3	26	9.2
Ohio	4,998	759	15.2	820	16.4	5,039	804	16.0	866	17.2
Oklahoma	1,402	86	6.1	100	7.1	1,432	77	5.4	91	6.4
Oregon	1,471	224	15.2	243	16.5	1,470	213	14.5	231	15.7
Pennsylvania	5,298	793	15.0	842	15.9	5,456	753	13.8	818	15.0
Rhode Island	487	79	16.3	83	17.0	494	79	15.9	83	16.8
South Carolina	1,765	54	3.0	74	4.2	1,739	40	2.3	58	3.3
South Dakota	347	21	6.0	27	7.7	350	21	5.9	29	8.2
Tennessee	2,465	164	6.7	191	7.7	2,368	128	5.4	156	6.6
Texas	9,072	457	5.0	573	6.3	9,485	506	5.3	590	6.2
Utah	1,001	58	5.8	67	6.7	1,035	51	4.9	63	6.1
Vermont	291	29	9.8	33	11.4	287	31	10.8	37	13.0
Virginia	3,308	176	5.3	218	6.6	3,406	165	4.8	211	6.2
Washington	2,645	510	19.3	536	20.3	2,746	523	19.1	559	20.4
West Virginia	700	99	14.2	110	15.7	688	99	14.4	107	15.5
Wisconsin	2,597	414	16.0	439	16.9	2,551	410	16.1	438	17.2
Wyoming	222	18	8.0	22	9.8	228	18	7.9	22	9.5

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² Data refer to members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union as well as workers who report no union affiliation but whose jobs are covered by a union or an employee association contract.

NOTE: Beginning in January 2005, data reflect revised population controls used in the household survey. Data refer to the sole or principal job of full- and part-time workers. Excluded are all self-employed workers regardless of whether or not their businesses are incorporated.